

September 9, 1968

Mr. Gordon R. Taylor
% Thames and Hudson Ltd.
30 Bloomsbury Street
London W.C. 1, England

Dear Mr. Taylor:

I was pleased to see that your book "The Biological Time Bomb" had come out in an American edition. You, of course, have written in a rather different style than I would have undertaken, but I am sure you will be able to reach a segment of the community who would not be influenced by the more cautious language I would find necessary to phrase my own remarks. If I have any fundamental criticism at all, it might be the need to point out more emphatically that every aspect of industrial civilization leads to rapid change of a kind that needs to be thought about just as carefully as the implications of biological progress. Our social institutions and our systems of education, in particular, certainly have as much to do to controlling the actuality of human nature as anything that the biologists will put forward. But I am sure you could correctly rebut that these matters are already subject of wide discussion and too few people are aware of the biological side.

I am writing to you now primarily to point out a couple of specific errors in your text that I am sure you want to see weeded out for possible future printings. On Page 172, you place me at the California Institute of Technology, obviously incorrectly, and you make an attribution to a broadcast with a phrase "tinkering with heredity" to which I happen to have a violent personal aversion. I realize that this is not technically an error since you do not make a direct quotation. I am sure if you found it convenient you would respond to my complaint about the phraseology. Since I have reacted directly to the quotation from Dr. Nirenberg, the remarks that I have enclosed might very appropriately be quoted verbatim at this point.

On Page 10, your quotation is a garble. I am enclosing the proper text that this sentence must have intended to quote.

May I revert again to the theme that I feel you have left out and which must be reinserted to restore a proper balance to the kind

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of discussion you are initiating. The caption to your Chapter 8, "The Future If Any" might epitomize it. The species is headed for disaster in its political and military institutions and a simple yearning for stasis, for repudiation of the responsibilities that the intellectual progress of man brings with it is hardly going to lead to a better world either. Without that balance, I am afraid that your genre of writing may encourage fear rather than evolution. I am also aware that nothing else is likely to attract the requisite degree of attention to the problems of man's future, if any.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL:lh
Encl.

P.S. Did you possibly mean Sinsheimer at Cal Tech?